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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER ASSUMES PRIME MINISTERSHIP

Derived from: DSCG 05-1, B,D.

¶1. (U) Qatar News Agency announced today that the Qatari Prime Minister, Abdullah bin Khalifa Al Thani, who is the Amir's brother, has resigned. The First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani (HBJ), has replaced him while retaining the foreign affairs portfolio. The Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry, Abdullah al-Attiyah, has assumed the title of Deputy PM and Minister of Energy and Industry. Mohamed Saleh al-Sadeh, the Managing Director of RasGas, was named the Minister of State for Energy and Industry.

Prime Minister Moves on to Business

¶2. (SBU) HBJ predicted this change in a conversation with A/S Welch in September. The outgoing prime minister, Abdullah bin Khalifa, has extensive business interests. His public role was minimal, and he only rarely spoke at local forums or traveled abroad on official business. He has taken the title of Private Counselor to the Amir and was present at the swearing-in of the new cabinet officials, indicating that the change reflected his wishes.

Increased Power for HBJ

¶3. (C) The change is a positive one for HBJ if only in form. It demonstrates that, after 15 years as foreign minister, he still has the full confidence of the Amir. He kept his prized foreign policy portfolio while rising to the head of the Cabinet of Ministers, the weekly meeting of which he will chair. All of Qatar's cabinet-level officials will report to him officially, except (as before) the influential energy minister, who retains his ability to consult directly and frequently with the Amir.

No Further Changes Expected

¶4. (C) The reshuffle has occurred just two days after Qataris elected their third Central Municipal Council. With approximately 51 percent participation, the election was deemed a success. We do not expect any other immediate changes. HBJ, who has spoken in various forums on the process of democratization, is likely to be the GOQ's lead man and public face from now through elections for Qatar's first legislative body, expected next year.

Best Approach is Direct One

¶5. (C) With Qatar's rapid growth in both the economic and

political spheres, one might hope to see a delegation of power to skilled decision-makers. This represents the opposite: Increased power in the hands of one individual. He will not share all decisions with his boss, partly because of the limits of time and partly to protect his role. A recommended approach for interacting with this natural businessman: Be clear about what we want -- and about what he can deliver to the Amir in return.

¶6. (SBU) Link to biography of Hamad bin Jassim Al Thani:

[www.intelink.gov.sgov/wiki/Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabr Al-Thani](http://www.intelink.gov.sgov/wiki/Hamad_Bin_Jassim_Bin_Jabr_Al-Thani)

¶7. (SBU) Longer analysis to follow.
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